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Strategic Theories and Concepts

SHORT TITLE	CONCEPT	AUTHOR
Air Superiority	Air superiority is essential to a successful air campaign. It is achieved by 1) mastery of the air, 2) attacking the means of production, 3) maintain battle ourselves, 4) prevent the enemy from battle	Trenchard
Annihilation	Annihilation seeks political victory through the complete destruction of the enemy armed forces	Delbruck
Attrition	Attrition seeks victory through the gradual destruction of the enemy's armed forces	Delbruck
Centers of Gravity	The COG is the hub of all power and movement on which everything depends, the point at which all energies should be directed	Clausewitz
Coercion	Compelling an enemy to involuntarily behave in a certain way by targeting the leadership, national communications, or political-economic centers	Pape
Command of the Sea	A naval force has command of the sea when it is so strong that its rivals cannot attack it directly. Also called sea control, this dominance may apply to its surrounding waters (i.e., the littoral) or may extend far into the oceans, meaning the country has a blue-water navy. It is the naval equivalent of air superiority	Mahan
Decapitation	Decapitation is to achieve strategic paralysis by targeting political leadership, command and control, strategic weapons, and critical economic nodes	Warden, Hart, Pape
Deception	A strategy that seeks to deceive, trick, or fool the enemy and create a false perception in a way that can be leveraged for a military advantage	Sun Tzu
Decisive Point	A geographic place, specific key event, critical system, or function that allows commanders to gain a marked advantage over an enemy and greatly influence the outcome of an attack	DoD Definition
Denial	A strategy that seeks to destroy an enemy's ability to wage war	Pape
DIME(FIL)	The elements of national power diplomacy, information, military, and economics, often included are financial, intelligence, and law enforcement	Joint Doctrine

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Fabius Strategy	Fabius was well aware of the military superiority of the Carthaginians, and so when Hannibal invaded Italy, Fabius refused to meet him in a pitched battle. Instead, he kept his troops close to Hannibal, hoping to exhaust him in a long war of attrition. Fabius was able to harass the Carthaginian foraging parties, limiting Hannibal's ability to wreak destruction while conserving his own military force. The delaying tactics involved a pincer of not directly engaging Hannibal while also exercising a "scorched earth" practice to prevent Hannibal's forces from obtaining grain and other resources	Fabius Maximus
Fog, Friction, Chance	War is characterized by fog, friction, and chance	Clausewitz
Golden Bridge	To leave an opponent an opportunity to withdraw in order to not force them to act out of desparation	Sun Tzu
Guerrilla Warfare	In guerrilla warfare, select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attacking from the west; avoid the solid, attack the hollow; attack; withdraw; deliver a lightning blow, seek a lightning decision. When guerrillas engage a stronger enemy, they withdraw when he advances; harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws. In guerilla strategy, the enemy's rear, flanks, and other vulnerable spots are his vital points, and there he must be harassed, attacked, dispersed, exhausted and annihilated	Mao
Heavy Force (COIN)	A counterinsurgency strategy that seeks to destroy and insurgency with overwhelming force while it is still in a manageable state	Kitson
Incentive	A strategy that uses incentives to gain cooperation	Army War College
Indirect Approach	Dislocation is the aim of strategy. Direct attacks almost never work, one must first upset the enemy's equilibrium, fix weakness and attack strength, Seven rules of strategy: 1) adjust your ends to your means, 2) keep your object always in mind, 3) choose the line of the least expectation, 4) exploit the line of least resistance, 5) take the line of operations which offers the most alternatives, 6) ensure both plans and dispositions are flexible, 7) do not throw your weight into an opponent while he is on guard, 8) do not renew an attack along the same lines if an attack has failed	Hart

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	perfections of means and spirit struggle quite in vain	
Intelligence	Sun Tzu advocated knowing oneself, the enemy, and the terrain. He also advocated the use of intelligence collection.	Sun Tzu
Iron Calculus of War	Resistance = Means x Will	Clausewitz
Limited War	A war in which the survival of a nation is not at stake	Clausewitz
MIDLIFE	The elements of national power diplomacy, information, military, and economics, often included are financial, intelligence, and law enforcement	DoD Definition
Moral Ascendency	Moral force is the trump card for any military event because as events change the human elements of war remain unchanged	Du Piq
National Military Strategy	A document approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for distributing and applying military power to attain national security strategy and national defense strategy objectives. Also called NMS	DoD Definition
National Security Strategy	A document approved by the President of the United States for developing, applying, and coordinating the instruments of national power to achieve objectives that contribute to national security. Also called NSS	DoD Definition
Naval-Economic Dominance	Navies exist to protect their nations commerce and interrupt that of the enemy	Mahan
Net Assessment and Reassessment	A look at both sides of complex military competitions, examining the long-term trends and present factors that govern the capabilities of a country and its potential enemies	Marshall
OODA Loop	Decision-making occurs in a recurring cycle of observe-orient-decide-act. An entity (whether an individual or an organization) that can process this cycle quickly, observing and reacting to unfolding events more rapidly than an opponent, can thereby "get inside" the opponent's decision cycle and gain the advantage	Boyd
Paradoxical Nature	The nature of strategy is a paradoxical and does not follow a linear pattern	Luttwak
Periclean Strategy	The two basic principles of the "Periclean Grand Strategy" were the rejection of appeasement (in accordance with which he urged the Athenians not to revoke the Megarian Decree) and the avoidance of overextension	Pericles

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Primary Trinity	(1) primordial violence, hatred, and enmity; (2) the play of chance and probability; and (3) war's element of subordination to rational policy	Clausewitz
Principles of War	-Objective (Direct every military operation towards a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable Objective) -Offensive (Seize, retain, and exploit the initiative) -Mass (Concentrate combat power at the decisive place and time) -Economy of Force (Allocate minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts) -Maneuver (place the enemy in a disadvantageous position through the flexible application of combat power) -Unity of Command (For every Objective, ensure Unity of effort under one responsible commander) -Security (Never permit the enemy to acquire an unexpected advantage) -Surprise (Strike the enemy at a time, at a place, or in a manner For which he is unprepared) -Simplicity (Prepare clear, uncomplicated plans and clear, concise orders to ensure thorough understanding)	US Army FM 3.0
	-Offensive (Seize, retain, and exploit the initiative)	
	-Mass (Concentrate combat power at the decisive place and time)	
	-Economy of Force (Allocate minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts) -Maneuver (place the enemy in a disadvantageous position through the flexible application of combat power)	
	-Surprise (Strike the enemy at a time, at a place, or in a manner For which he is unprepared)	
Punishment	A strategy that seeks to push a society beyond its economic and physiological breaking point	Pape
Raiding Strategy	A strategy that seeks to destroy the enemy	Jones
Rapid Decisive Operations	Compelling an adversary to undertake certain actions or denying the adversary the ability to coerce or attack others. Although many RDO principles will apply to larger-scale, longer-lasting operations, the RDO	

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Revolution	In guerrilla terminology, strategy is understood as the analysis of the objectives to be achieved in light of the total military situation and the overall ways of reaching these objectives. To have a correct strategic appreciation from the point of view of the guerrilla band, it is necessary to analyze fundamentally what will be the enemy's mode of action. If the final objective is always the complete destruction of the opposite force, the enemy is confronted in the case of a civil war of this kind with the standard task: he will have to achieve the total destruction of each one of the components of the guerrilla band. The guerrilla fighter, on the other hand, must analyze the resources which the enemy has for trying to achieve that outcome: the means in men, in mobility, in popular support, in armaments, in capacity of leadership on which he can count. We must make our own strategy adequate on the basis of these studies, keeping in mind always the final objective of defeating the enemy army.	Guevara
Risk	Threaten the things that the leadership value	Schelling
Sea Control	Navies do not have to command the expanse of the sea, simply control the most appropriate areas for the circumstances at hand	Corbett
Sea-Ground Connection	The importance of navies lay in their ability to affect events on land	Corbett
Shape, Clear, Hold, Build	The counterinsurgency theory that states the process of winning and insurgency is shape, clear, hold, build	Galula
Secondary Trinity	People, Army, and Government	Clausewitz
Separation of Insurgents	A counterinsurgency strategy should first seek to separate the enemy from the population, then deny the enemy reentry, and finally execute long enough to deny the insurgent access	Trinquier
Sequential, Simultaneous, Cumulative	The distinction on whether the effects of a military strategy on an enemy are in sequence, simultaneous, or cumulative	US Army War College
Small Navy	Technology and the size of the ocean make sea control difficult and expensive, a country is better off having a small navy	Ecole
Strategic Culture	Countries have distinct strategic cultures that affect their decision making	Snyder/Rand

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Strategic Stalemate	traditional methods of warfare as forces gained parity	Mao
Strategic Offensive	The third phase of people's war characterized by regular forces when force advantage was gained over the enemy	Mao
Strategy	A prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives.	DoD Definition
Swarming	Military swarming involves the use of a decentralized force against an opponent, in a manner that emphasizes mobility, communication, unit autonomy and coordination/synchronization. Historical military forces have used the principles of swarming, but there is now active research in designing military doctrines that consciously draw ideas from swarming. In nature and nonmilitary situations, there are several forms of swarming. Biologically driven forms are often complex adaptive systems, but have no central planning, simple individual rules, and nondeterministic behavior that evolves with—or fails to evolve with—the situation	RAND
Systems Approach	Nation-states operate like biological organisms composed of discrete systems. These systems included: leadership, organic essentials, infrastructure, population, and the military	Warden
Theater Strategy	Concepts and courses of action directed toward securing the objectives of national and multinational policies and strategies through the synchronized and integrated employment of military forces and other instruments of national power	DoD Definition
Tipping Point	A strategy that seeks to achieve "levels at which the momentum for change becomes unstoppable." Gladwell defines a tipping point as a sociological term: "the moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point."	Gladwell
Total War	War in which a nation's survival is at stake	Clausewitz
VUCA	Volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity characterize the strategic environment	US Army War College
War Expediency	War is a matter of expedients	von Moltke
Weinberger-Powell Doctrine	A list of questions have to be answered affirmatively before military action is taken by the United States:	Powell

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	been fully exhausted? Is there a plausible exit strategy to avoid endless entanglement? Have the consequences of our action been fully considered? Is the action supported by the American people? Do we have genuine broad international support?	
Win Without Fighting	Sun Tzu argued that a brilliant general was one that could win without fighting	Sun Tzu

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